

**ANNAPOLIS, MD – This afternoon, Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (MD-5) accepted the Nancy S. Grasmick Leadership in Early Care and Education Award from the Maryland Family Network. The Grasmick award is given to a Marylander who, through his or her outstanding record of accomplishments, exemplifies the commitment to young children, their families, their teachers and care providers that former Maryland State School Superintendent Dr. Nancy Grasmick embodied throughout her career. Below are his remarks as prepared for delivery:**

“Thank you. I am honored to be the inaugural recipient of the Nancy Grasmick award. Nancy and I have been friends for over fifty years, and I could think of no one more deserving of having this award named for her.

“In her twenty years as Superintendent and her years of service to the city of Baltimore prior to serving in Annapolis, Nancy has been an untiring advocate for all our students and, in particular, a voice for the disabled. She has crossed our state week after week, visiting schools and meeting with administrators, educators, parents, and students to make sure Maryland’s education system is the best in the nation.

“Central to her approach has been preparing children for elementary school through increasing access to early childhood learning. In doing so, she is following the timeless wisdom of another outstanding Marylander, Frederick Douglass. He said ‘it is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.’

“Early education was also a passionate cause for my wife Judy. She made the wellbeing of families with young children and their access to education and quality social services her number one mission. Today, there are 26 Judy centers throughout Maryland, providing single point access to a range of community services and early learning programs.

“Right now as our nation faces a cascade of challenges, my primary concern is making sure we help Americans find jobs. A good education has always been the key to a good job. That’s why

I have been leading an effort in Congress, along with other House Democrats, called Make It In America.

“It promotes economic growth and job creation through investments in our workforce, including a strong education system that prepares graduates for the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy. Part of this, I believe, must be a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education that strengthens the way we prepare children for kindergarten.

“President Obama reaffirmed the importance of early childhood education when he announced the \$500 million Race To The Top early learning challenge grant program in May, and Maryland’s application has been submitted.

“Earlier this month, Secretary Duncan announced the creation of a new office of early learning at the U.S. Department of Education, a move that will focus more attention on early childhood programs.

“St. Ignatius of Loyola once famously said ‘give me the child until he is seven, and I will show you the man.’ He knew what Nancy knows and what Judy understood so well – that the first years of life are the most important ones for development of the so-called ‘soft skills’ that help make people better citizens, better neighbors, and better workers.

“I will continue to fight for the investments in early education that will help more children in Maryland and across our nation enter school better prepared for success. I want our education system to be able to say to parents: give us your child until seven, and we will show you the student ready to achieve. Thank you.”